

Summer 1999

Service Learning as Democratic Action

Joel Westheimer

Joseph Kahne

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slcestgen>



Part of the [Service Learning Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

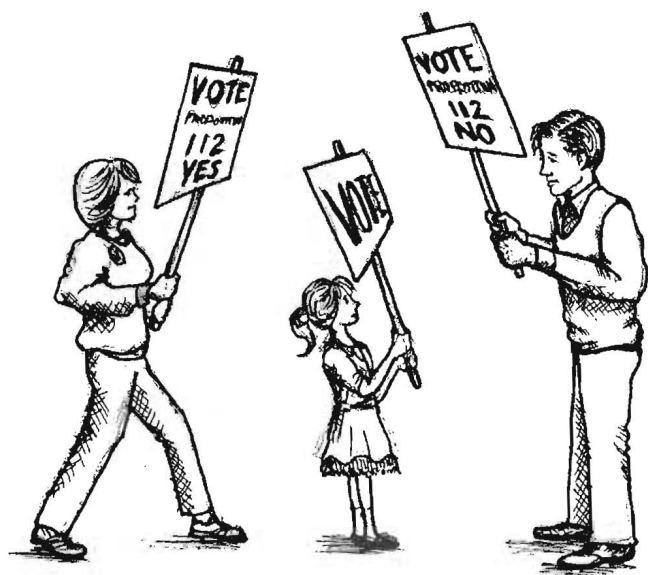
Westheimer, Joel and Kahne, Joseph, "Service Learning as Democratic Action" (1999). *Special Topics, General*. 114.
<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slcestgen/114>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Topics in Service Learning at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Special Topics, General by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.



Service Learning as Democratic Action

by Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne



A once-troubled, now revamped, middle-school employs a service learning program that seeks to supply students with the tools to be responsive and dedicated citizens.

Joel Westheimer is an assistant professor of Teaching and Learning and a Fellow of the Center for the Study of American Culture and Education at New York University. Joseph Kahne is an associate professor in the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Both formerly taught in the New York City Public Schools.

The purpose of education is not just for kids to have choices, but for kids to act on their knowledge, to create structures and to change and transform structures so that the world is a better place for everybody.

—a teacher at C. Wright Mills Middle School

It is often said that today's youth will be called on to solve tomorrow's problems. Schools provide essential preparation for this task. Despite the rhetoric, curriculum that considers the nature of social problems and ways youth might respond as citizens rarely gets center stage. Rather than focusing on ways youth might participate through democratic institutions to foster a better society, curricular discussions focus on the acquisition of academic and vocational skills. To the extent that the democratic purposes of education are raised, educators emphasize conveying knowledge regarding U.S. history and government structures and exercises in which students simulate the operations of various public institutions such as courts and legislatures.

These matters are all worthy of attention, but they differ in fundamental ways from efforts to prepare students to improve society. The recent widespread attention to service learning—curriculum built around or connected to community-service activities—has been similarly compromised by a lack of focus on democratic aims. Although those who promote service learning curriculum in schools have mounted an often effective defense against the usual and predictable criticism—that experiential curricula such as service learning detract from traditional education in the disciplines—surprisingly few have brought attention to this entirely different shortcoming of many service learning activities.

In this article, we consider what it might mean to move preparation for membership in a participatory

democracy to the center of a school's educational agenda. *Participatory* democracy contrasts with *procedural* democracy. In the latter, citizens maintain the right to vote and take part, while in the former, they actually do take part. In framing our discussion of education for participatory democracy—that is, education that fosters youth's ability to work collectively toward a better society—we examine a school in which service learning means learning in the service of promoting participatory democracy, a school unabashed in its commitment to fostering the attitudes, skills, and knowledge required to engage and act on important social issues. C. Wright Mills Middle School seemed to us to offer such a model, doubtless one among many alternatives.

C. Wright Mills Academic Middle School

On a crowded, bustling side street in a Latino community sits C. Wright Mills Academic Middle School. In 1984, the school, located in the heart of a major North American city, closed and re-opened under a court-ordered consent decree with an almost entirely new staff and the goal of attracting a diverse student population. Currently, Mills enrolls a student body that is 38 percent Spanish surnamed, 20 percent "other" white, 14 percent Chinese, 9 percent African American, and 6 percent Filipino. Once counted among the poorest performing schools in the district, Mills now boasts high attendance rates, high performance on standardized tests, and numerous awards.

Following the consent decree restructuring, the new Mills faculty created a series of mission statements and learning objectives. In many ways, the mission is progressive, but not unique. The school "seeks to develop the whole child academically, socially, and emotionally." The faculty use a "student-centered approach" that develops "self-esteem." They maintain "high academic expectations," recognizing that students "bring a rich diversity of cultures, experiences, languages, and learning styles that can be developed and shared in [the] school setting."

The Mills tenets, however, also include less-typical commitments to improving society. The faculty want students to "think critically about what they are learning, draw appropriate conclusions, and discover what is relevant to their lives." Students will "carry out complex projects involving predictions, research, analysis, and evaluation" and they will do so in "contexts relevant to their education and to their lives." They will learn to "work individually and cooperatively," taking responsibility for "their own lives and actions and for the well-being of both the local and

global community."

The teachers at C. Wright Mills aim to instill in students hope for a more just society and equip them with the tools to pursue that hope. As one teacher explained,

I'd like to see them have an awareness of what makes the world, in their eyes, a good place and a set of skills that allows them to act on their vision. I'd like [students to understand] the need for individuals and groups to act collectively to make the world a good place.

Social Studies and Project-Based Curricular Goals

The curricular approach taken at Mills, similar to that advocated by *social reconstructionist* education reformers of the 1920s and 1930s, is to emphasize what the Mills staff calls transdisciplinary projects aimed at social needs and to couple these with academic analysis of the social and institutional context. These projects comprise a substantial portion of students' work at the school. Indeed, an interdisciplinary group of four subject area teachers designing the year's curriculum is more likely to begin with learning objectives linked to the goal of preparing responsive citizens, and then think of ways to make links to academic material, than the other way around. The challenge for this school and others with a democratic mission is to structure curriculum activities that advance these goals while simultaneously supporting systematic and sequential development of disciplinary knowledge.

In an effort to link the curriculum to the school's mission, teachers decided early on to base their transdisciplinary curriculum in the social studies. To make clear the import of their discussions, links were

The challenge for this school and others with a democratic mission is to structure curriculum activities that advance these goals while simultaneously supporting systematic and sequential development of disciplinary knowledge.

also made to students' present-day realities. Mills' "Learning Challenges," for example, reflect the faculty's belief in the power of interdisciplinary experiences and hands-on, purposeful activities to achieve these ends. These activities, which most often take place in the local community, are indicative of the subset of service

learning approaches that emphasize social justice and change. Developed in conjunction with Project 2061, a national effort to promote science in schools, these learning challenges bring students and faculty at Mills together in interdisciplinary groups to study problems of social consequence.

In many schools, interdisciplinary curriculum revolves around themes. Elementary school students might study dinosaurs through stories, art, and science. Middle school students might carry the theme of "cities" through each of the subject areas. The learning challenge is structured differently. It begins with a prompting challenge that requires investigation and response—how to respond to hunger or homelessness in the community, for example. The subject areas are then employed in answering the prompting challenge. As Bernard Farges, a Project 2061 director, explains, the educational purpose shifts from the learning objective to *learning from the objective*. Students work in groups on pieces of a larger project, make presentations on their findings, and take actions with respect to their ongoing commitments to the community. At Mills, the commitment to democratic education means that each challenge selected (between six and ten each year) revolves around an issue of social significance.

"Addressing Violence in Our Everyday Lives" was a challenge for an eighth-grade group that began with the question: How can you empower yourself and your peers to address the violence in your life and in society in a positive way? The two-week challenge began with five days of regular core academic classes that provided students with the background knowledge and skills they would need for week two. Students then broke up into groups focused on one of five "sub-challenges." The first, led by the social studies teacher, assessed violence in the media. Students watched television and movies, chronicling observations and statistics about what they saw. They interviewed experts in an effort to analyze media portrayals of violence critically. They asked questions such as "When you sit down in front of the television, you're doing the watching—but who's really in control, you or the show?" and "Does the media show violence as it really is?" Based on their analysis, students formulated, wrote, and revised action recommendations for their peers.

A second group dealt with the problem of gang violence. The language arts teachers engaged students in readings, discussion, and written exercises that examined the causes and impact of gang membership. A group led by a physical education teacher who voluntarily joined this particular family's challenge activities examined violence in sports. Group members asked

how society has condoned and encouraged violence in sports. The math teacher explored the economic costs of violence in their city. After researching the statistics on the costs of different violent activities, students were required to develop solutions to urban violence. Finally, the science teacher led a group that explored violence in families. They talked about the myths and realities of rape, sexual abuse, and domestic violence. They assembled a survival guide with tips and community resources for other teenagers and created a public service announcement, which they distributed on video.

For each "sub-challenge" project, students were required to complete learning logs, oral and visual presentations, a substantive written product, and an evaluation of their group's cooperative work process. As would be expected, the curriculum appears to have affected youth in different ways. For one student, the two weeks spoke to personal issues: "I had never dared to talk about all of these things [how violence affects me] before this week. It made me realize how much violence is in my life." Another student was more focused on the imperative of action: "I hope that by talking about some of these things in the classroom, we'll be more able to speak out in the streets about these problems." Though these sentiments were commonly expressed, they were not universal. Many were drawn more to the excitement generated by the experiential nature of the projects than by the emphasis on critical politics:

It was fun. Like well, it was a lot of hard work because you had to do a lot of research, calling up people. . . . We did all the things on our own. And you know, it wasn't like sitting in class and listening to the teachers talk. It was just like doing things on our own.

Moreover, students did not select this school because of its focus on social issues; they were attracted by the "high [academic] standards," because, "the teachers really want you to learn," and because "the school is safe and teachers are nice." Not all students were ready or interested in engaging in sustained analysis of social issues.

On the other hand, many were. When asked about the learning challenge on violence in their community, for example, one student responded: "We did a poster on violence that had a slogan: If you don't like a gun in your face, look back to your roots and your race." He went on to explain that learning about the Aztecs can help Latin gang members understand their condition, namely that "they're all killing each other

for a color . . . we're trying to say, just look back to your roots and it shows that you guys are all the same [all descendants] from Latins and also we're all just people."

A Project-Based Curriculum

If the desire and capacity to respond to social needs are prerequisites for participatory democracy, young people need to have experiences that develop this orientation and foster these abilities. In addition to traditional academic discipline-based goals, preparation for participatory democracy requires both that youth develop a "spirit of service" and the civic skills needed for effective civic action. Making speeches, writing memos, facilitating and participating in group discussions, organizing community events, and mobilizing fellow community members are examples of skills required for effective participation in civic democracies. Such opportunities are rare in traditional classrooms, which focus primarily on the academic performance of individual students. Indeed, an extensive review of the literature reveals that social studies texts rarely emphasize the importance of, or skills connected with, civic participation; that teachers rarely engage students in such activities; and that students tend to view participation in their communities and schools as unrelated to their status as "good" citizens. In contrast, both teachers at Mills and social reconstructionists during the progressive era pursued this democratic agenda by making projects connected with social needs a central component of their curriculum.

For example, in one learning challenge we observed at Mills, "The Garden against Hunger," students produced a brochure showing sites of soup kitchens in their neighborhood, wrote to parents and leaders of city agencies inviting them to attend a fundraiser, and published a newsletter. They created computer databases to share information with other groups, parents, and members of city agencies. They chose sites for brochure distribution. Finally, they made presentations to parents and representatives from city agencies, homeless organizations, local media, and members of the local community.

These learning challenges modeled for students the importance of civic participation and required that students employ the skills needed to engage such tasks. This emphasis is reminiscent of Progressive-Era reforms that engaged youth in projects of social significance to make schools "a genuine form of active community life, instead of a place set apart to learn lessons."

Service Learning as Democratic Action Rooted in the Social Studies

Mills orients both its overall curriculum and its transdisciplinary projects around social studies. Nationally, the trend is in the opposite direction. Increasingly, mandated tests and other school policies emphasize math, science, and literacy skills rather than social studies. New York State public schools' new curriculum standards, for example, specifies achievement standards across three areas—math, language arts, and science—omitting social studies entirely. For the New York State Board of Education and others, social studies provide topics, as needed, in the service of acquiring skills in these other disciplines, but it is not viewed as a primary concern. At Mills, in contrast, disciplinary learning is used in the service of social studies—that is, in the service of projects, themes, and objectives of social interest and consequence. Thus, interdisciplinary learning challenges focus on the environment, political elections, food production and distribution, and violence in the community.

In an effort to make students aware that the social issues being studied are not simply matters for abstract speculation, the curriculum consistently links topics to contemporary issues and students' personal experiences. In a literature class, for example, students read a biography of a Native American woman and discussed historical oppression—the treatment of native peoples by the U.S. government. Teachers used this as a springboard to examine contemporary and controversial examples of oppression and injustice in their city. A science class studied the environmental impact of European colonization of the Americas and also explored recent environmental damage from an underreported oil spill off a nearby coast.

Education for Democratic Action: Two Challenges

1. Development of Academic Skills. Although we argue—as do many advocates of service learning—for emphasizing links between academic work and civic priorities, we also recognize that many educators' hesitation to endorse civic education stems from the concern that this focus distracts them from their most fundamental task—development of academic skills. We believe such concerns are warranted. Some experiential activities and projects that aim primarily at social development may neglect academic priorities. A math teacher at Mills, for example, described his frustration with trying to tie sophisticated understandings of math concepts to project-based activities:

Some interdisciplinary projects are great and can be a good way to learn. But it's not the best way for all curriculum. Math always ends up accommodating the other subjects, statistics one day, land area the next. . . . A student like Tom ends up doing algebra on the side. . . . I won't get through all I have planned this year because of Challenge Week, Ocean Week, Awareness Month.

Similarly, John Dewey worried that the projects undertaken as part of the "project method" were often "too trivial to be educative" and that the learning that results is often of "a merely technical sort, not a genuine carrying forward of theoretical knowledge."

Designing curriculum similar to Mills' learning challenges that enable sequential development of disciplinary knowledge is enormously difficult. Often, teachers may not have the time, commitment, or insights necessary to implement this kind of curriculum. This concern parallels contemporary discussions of "hands-on" math and science education, in which educators worry that the focus on experience may undermine attention to the formal and theoretical aspects of the disciplines.

To note this risk, however, is not to concede the case. The same math teacher quoted above went on to say:

I like [the interdisciplinary projects] because it gives me a chance to see how students do all around, like Lisa [a science teacher] and I were just talking, you get a broader range on each student. . . . So I can't NOT do challenge week. Instead, I have to say, how else can I do it? Maybe I'll do probability.

This parallels Dewey's perspective on the project method:

The defect is not inherent. It is possible to find problems and projects that come within the scope and capacities of the experience of the learner and which have a sufficiently long span so that they raise new questions, introduce new and related undertakings, and create a demand for fresh knowledge.

Similarly, Deborah Meier, George Wood, and reformers who advocate whole language approaches and constructivism have demonstrated that curriculum promoting the development of disciplinary knowledge through methods consistent with democratic priorities can be successfully implemented in contemporary schools. Indeed, Mills was a popular school primarily because of its reputation for high academic

standards, and students consistently performed in the top 20 percent of the district on standardized tests.

2. *Education or Indoctrination.* If a group of visitors walked down the hall at Mills prior to the recent California election, they would have seen walls covered with a variety of posters. Some of these posters simply communicated information:

PROPOSITION 204—THE CLEAN WATER ACT

Pro: More water in residential and agricultural areas.

Con: Increase in water costs and taxes.

WHAT IS PROPOSITION 210, THE MINIMUM WAGE?

Currently the minimum wage is \$4.25/hour. Proposition 210 would raise the minimum wage to \$5.00/hour as of March 1, 1997, and to \$5.75/hour as of March 1, 1998.

Other posters, however, presented clear positions on issues of social and political significance:

YES TO PROPOSITION 204:

Safe, Clean, Reliable Water Act.
Encourage safe drinking water.

NO ON PROPOSITION 209:

209 will take away affirmative action and with it the chance for everyone to go to school.

DANA MARTIN FOR THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

She Is Pro-Choice!
She Supports Affirmative Action!

Although most educators and parents agree that the ability to analyze and form opinions on issues is an important part of students' education, the specifics of curriculum and pedagogy that aim to accomplish this goal are far more controversial. When a social studies teacher in a school in Oregon taught a unit on the history of environmentalism, some parents and school-board members objected, asserting that the unit was indoctrinating children to be antilogging and pro-environment. Similar concerns led Oregon board members, along with officials of several other districts and states, to ban the Dr. Seuss book *The Lorax*, which depicts a factory rapidly chopping down all the trees to make a popular, but useless, product. Likewise, opponents of New York City's proposed "Rainbow Curriculum" argued that the section on prejudice should not be part of the school curriculum because of a pas-

sage encouraging tolerance for homosexuals. The conflict ended with not only the exclusion of the passage but also the resignation of the chancellor of the New York City schools.

When do teaching and service-oriented activities become indoctrination? How can schools teach students to think critically about matters of social policy while maintaining a judicious balance of alternative perspectives? What happens when students examine current issues and explore paths to improving society that conflict with mainstream or parental values? At Mills, for example, some parents and administrators had misgivings about the signs in the hallways described earlier that advocate particular candidates or positions. Before addressing these questions, it is worth noting that Mills faculty members share two approaches to meaningful explorations of important social issues and that these approaches are themselves the subject of serious debate.

First, teachers at Mills link their discussion and analysis of important issues to action. They believe in challenging the prevailing culture of inaction and passivity with respect to issues of social significance and see action as essential to the workings of a participatory democracy. The primary value of this action lies not in the service it provides, they might argue, but in the opportunity it offers students to develop skills related to participatory democracy and in the social, participatory orientation it models. This perspective was well articulated by a Mills student who, when asked about the learning challenges, told us: "It teaches us how important it is to have social responsibility, like telling people about what's happening in the world, like the teachers are doing for us, and we're going to do it for the community."

Second, the Mills faculty works to ensure that students are exposed to—and can understand—a range of alternative perspectives. A democracy cannot function meaningfully without informed and critical analysis of issues and social problems. Although it is common for social studies teachers and others to engage students in exercises in which they must differentiate between "facts" and "opinions," rarely are these discussions linked to participation and action. At Mills, information and perspectives on the legislative issues described earlier are not simply learned but communicated to the school community.

Moreover, Mills teachers develop students' abilities to discern fact from opinion by explicitly challenging current widespread assumptions and beliefs rather than examining perspectives held by citizens in the past that are no longer seen as credible. For instance,

teachers at other schools hold up landmark historical examples of racism such as legislative decisions based on the idea that black Americans were not as smart as their white counterparts. Mills teachers in contrast, understand that to develop the capacity for critical analysis, students need to examine issues for which their own perspectives and positions could be challenged. That there are not, as of yet, clear "answers" (widespread

They believe in challenging the prevailing culture of inaction and passivity with respect to issues of social significance and see action as essential to the workings of a participatory democracy.

agreement) to particular questions raised makes those issues useful. Whether gay men should be allowed to serve in the U.S. military becomes a more useful issue for discussion and critique than whether African American men should be allowed to serve. The former forces difficult analysis and consideration of a variety of viewpoints, while the latter, piggybacking on already-established widespread agreement, fails to do so.

Progressive educators may correctly recognize that students must have experiences engaging controversial issues, but this does not mean that they have worked out strategies for doing so that are consistent with both democratic sensibilities and parental concerns. The tensions raised by the approaches to teaching critical analysis and linking learning to action described above are many; educators' pursuit of such goals through curriculum is fraught with complications. At their base, these "complications" arise because the rhetoric of participatory democracy is being taken seriously and enacted. The prevailing culture of inaction and passivity with respect to issues of social significance is being explicitly and overtly challenged. The hesitancy of many educators to engage critically and then act on controversial issues, however, has a rational basis.

First, although the actions students take in conjunction with the Mills learning challenges may be beneficial, others may be inappropriate. In a well-functioning democracy, citizens act when they find issues compelling and after gathering sufficient information. Frequently, students will not find all issues worthy of civic action or will not achieve the level of clarity regarding an issue that would make actions appropriate. Moreover, teachers must have a certain degree of control over their curriculum. Many kinds of

actions that would be appropriate for citizens, such as attending a protest or working with a community organization, may not be structured in ways that enable a teacher to be sure a given action will be safe or educationally valuable. Thus, although experiences at Mills demonstrate the substantial educational potential of civic action as part of the curriculum, there are reasons to temper blanket support of this practice.

Second, the consensus that teachers should help students think critically does not mean pursuit of this goal is straightforward. The consensus regarding critical thinking generally vanishes when the possibility arises that students will articulate conclusions that differ from mainstream or parental values. Critical thinking is commonly understood to be the use of reason in reaching judgments, while indoctrination is a process whereby ideologically committed instructors constrain reason in an effort to lead students to particular conclusions. The problem with this formulation is that it assumes a "neutral" ground exists. It doesn't. This perspective obscures the ways the dominant culture and ideology are embedded in allegedly neutral reasoning.

*The consensus that teachers should help
students think critically does not mean pursuit
of this goal is straightforward.*

Many critics of the kind of curriculum employed by Mills teachers argue that these educators indoctrinate. They charge that this kind of curriculum emphasizes liberal or left-wing critiques of immigration policy, environmental policy, and the capitalist system. In one sense, these concerns have an empirical basis. No Mills students, for example, engaged in a community action project that would be considered politically conservative. Mills teachers, in fact, often struggled with this tension. A "debate" on immigration was retitled a "panel" on immigration after teachers grew concerned that the invited participants did not represent a broad spectrum of perspectives. These concerns lead many educators, including many at Mills, to respond that they aim to be "value free" by presenting "all sides" of a given controversial subject.

This stance, however, fails to resolve the problem and encounters resistance from both the left and the right. A variety of conservative groups, for example, criticize "critical thinking" because they feel it "means teaching children to empty themselves of their own values (transmitted from parents, church, and culture)."

They argue that such curriculum, far from being "value-free," often reflects a form of indoctrination toward "relativistic" and "secular-humanist" values.

However, others argue persuasively that claims of "value neutrality" often function to hide the "indoctrination" of more mainstream values (the importance of individual autonomy and the efficacy of market incentives, for example). Educators may strive to tell "both sides of the story." They may seek balance or neutrality and hope students will then be free to form their own ideas about issues. But, as George Counts wrote in 1932, "Neutrality with respect to the great issues that agitate society . . . is practically tantamount to giving support to the most powerful forces engaged in the contest." False notions of neutrality, Counts argued, can constrain critical thinking by failing to make visible those "social forces" hidden by familiarity.

Furthermore, because the media and the broader culture disproportionately reflect particular interests and perspectives and obscure others, there is no level playing field on which students can discuss issues. Educators must therefore help students consider the interests and power relations embedded in unfamiliar perspectives—a formidable task. Such concerns motivated Mills' learning challenges in which study of "gang violence and ways to prevent it" led students to consider how society might condone and encourage violence through sports and the media. One teacher explained his stance on "value neutrality" this way:

What I'd like students to have is an open mind to things that are different from what they've experienced and an eagerness to find out about it. Not a lack of prejudice necessarily, but an awareness of where their prejudices lie.

In sum, critical thinking in relation to political issues requires attention to situated ideas—ideas in the context of power relations and cultural norms. Students, if they are truly to "serve" society, must learn how to respond to social problems and also how certain problems come to the fore while others remain unnamed. They must learn to evaluate legislative proposals and also the social and political dynamics that favor one proposal over another.

Concluding Thoughts

A clear vision exists for education that promotes democratic action. Unfortunately, many obstacles face educators pursuing this vision. On the one hand, the importance of this task, and the thought and care with which Mills' teachers and students pursue it, is inspir-

ing. Their approach invites more controversy than efforts to simulate the operations of courts and legislatures, for example. But this approach is more exciting, precisely because it is more controversial: controversy is an engine of progress in a democracy, and learning about different positions and how to argue for them is an educational step toward participating in the issues of our time. Unlike many teachers who also engage in service learning activities, teachers like those at Mills aim directly at preparing youth to improve society through democratic action.

On the other hand, it is doubtful that a significant number of teachers, let alone schools or districts, will pursue this goal. Not only are the talents and commitments necessary to pursue these priorities formidable, but the incentives to bypass these goals are significant. The curricular agenda described earlier breeds controversy, and controversy is not something schools handle well. In part, this is because they are governed democratically. Ironically, the civic community (parents and community members) that governs schools often sanctions those who implement curriculum that engages the contentious issues a civic community must be able to engage for democracy to work. Administrators also work to avoid controversy. When a science class studying levels of radon at Mills discovered levels above the recommended standard, the school district leaders grew concerned—not primarily with the levels of radon, but with the potential controversy and undesirable publicity such findings might promote.

The policies and practices of teachers, schools, and districts can promote or constrain the degree to which students acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to function effectively as citizens in a democracy. Mills teachers and others following a similar path may lack sufficient answers to important questions, and many roadblocks may constrain implementation of their vision, but they do provide a vision for a school curriculum that encourages the kind of service that demands participation, critical analysis, and action—pedagogical prerequisites for democracy.

These educators offer us not only a vision of education for action, but also important strategies for getting us there. **eh**

1. This article is adapted by permission of the publisher from the authors' recent book chapter "Education for Action: Preparing Youth for Participatory Democracy" in *Teaching for Social Justice: A Democracy and Education Reader*, eds. William Ayers, Jean Ann Hunt, and Therese Quinn (New York: The New Press, Teachers College Press, 1998). All names of people and schools that appear in this article are pseudonyms.

2. This portrait is based on 1st-year ethnographic study conducted by one of the authors, which included extensive observations, interviews with the entire staff and two dozen students, analysis of lesson plans and of school documents. For details see Joel Westheimer, *Among Schoolteachers: Community, Autonomy, and Ideology in Teachers' Work* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1998).

3. For an in-depth discussion of Mills, how its teachers work collectively, professional development activities at the school, and its governance structure, see Westheimer, *Among Schoolteachers*, chapter 3.

4. See Joseph Kahne and Joel Westheimer, "In the Service of What? The Politics of Service Learning," *Phi Delta Kappan* 77 (May 1996): 593-599.

5. Sheldon Berman, *Children's Social Consciousness and the Development of Social Responsibility* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997).

6. John Dewey, "The School and Society," in *The Child and the Curriculum and the School and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1900/1956), 14.

7. Dewey, "The Way Out of Educational Confusion" in A. Boydston, ed., *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-53* Vol. 6 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1931), 86-87.

8. Rosalind Driver, et al., "Constructing Scientific Knowledge in the Classroom," *Educational Researcher* 23, no. 7 (1994): 5-12; and M. Varelas, "Between Theory and Data in a 7th Grade Science Class," *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 33, no. 3): 229-263.

9. Dewey, *The Way Out*, 86.

10. Deborah Meier, *The Power of Their Ideas* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); George Wood, *Schools That Work: America's Most Innovative Public Education Programs* (New York: Dutton, 1992). For discussion on the unnecessary division between teaching the "basics" and teaching democratic values, see also Melinda Fine, *Habits of Mind: Struggling Over Values in America's Classrooms* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995).

11. Harvey Siegel, *Educating for Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking, and Education* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

12. R. Simonds, "A Plea for the Children," *Educational Leadership* 51, no. 4 (1994): 15.

13. Peter McLaren and Marc Pruyn, "Indoctrination," *Philosophy of Education: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland, 1996).

14. George Counts, "Dare Progressive Education Be Progressive?" *Progressive Education* 9 (1932): 257-263.